



Standard Test Method for Total Chemically Bound Nitrogen in Water by Pyrolysis and Chemiluminescence Detection¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 5176; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ε) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the determination of the total nitrogen content of water in concentrations from 0.5 to 1000 mg/L. Higher nitrogen concentrations may be determined by making the proper dilutions.

1.2 This test method does not determine molecular nitrogen (N₂).

1.3 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The values given in parentheses are for information only.

1.4 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*

D 1129 Terminology Relating to Water²

D 1193 Specification for Reagent Water²

D 2777 Practice for Determination of Precision and Bias of Applicable Methods of Committee D19 on Water²

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms used in this test method, refer to Terminology D 1129.

3.2 *Definition of Term Specific to This Standard:*

3.2.1 *total chemically bound nitrogen*—all inorganic and organic nitrogen in the sample, except molecular nitrogen (N₂).

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 The sample of water is introduced into a stream of oxygen or inert/oxygen mix flowing through a quartz pyrolysis tube. Oxidative pyrolysis converts chemically bound nitrogen to nitric oxide (NO). The gas stream is dried and the NO is

contacted with ozone (O₃) producing metastable nitrogen dioxide (NO₂*). As the NO₂* decays, light is emitted and detected by a photomultiplier tube. The resulting signal is a measure of the total chemically bound nitrogen in the sample.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method is useful for the determination of total chemically bound nitrogen in wastewaters and other waters.

6. Apparatus³

6.1 *Pyrolysis Furnace*—An electric tube furnace capable of achieving a temperature of 1100°C. The furnace may be single or multizoned and may have common or separate and independent temperature controls.

6.2 *Pyrolysis Tube*—The pyrolysis tube must be fabricated from quartz and should be designed to ensure complete pyrolysis of a wide variety of samples.

6.3 *Chemiluminescence Detector*—The detector shall have a photomultiplier tube capable of sensing the light emission of the decaying NO₂*. The detector shall have digital display, onboard ozone generator and analog output for data system or strip chart recorder.

6.4 *Recorder (optional)*—The recorder shall be able to accept a 1 V full scale signal and to provide a chart speed of 1 cm/min.

6.5 *Microlitre Syringe*—Any standard series of microlitre syringes with stainless steel needles is acceptable. See manufacturer's instructions for appropriate syringe sizes.

6.6 *Syringe Drive Mechanism*—The syringe drive shall be capable of driving the sample from a microlitre syringe at a controlled, reproducible rate.

6.7 *Sample Boat*—Samples with high concentrations of suspended matter or dissolved nonvolatile compounds may tend to plug the syringe needle upon injection into the pyrolysis tube. In this case a sample boat of quartz or platinum, with or without quartz wool, should be used, in conjunction with the appropriate pyrolysis tube. The pyrolysis tube shall allow the

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D19 on Water and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D19.06 on Methods for Analysis for Organic Substances in Water.

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² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 11.01.

³ The apparatus described in 6.1-6.7 is manufactured by Atek Instruments, Inc., Houston, TX and Dohrmann Division of Rosemount Analytical Inc., Santa Clara, CA, and was used in the validation study of this test method.



introduction of the sample into the boat by microlitre syringe without interrupting the gas flow system.

7. Reagents and Materials

7.1 *Purity of Reagents*—Reagent grade chemicals shall be used. Unless otherwise indicated, it is intended that all reagents shall conform to the specifications of the Committee on Analytical Reagents of the American Chemical Society.⁴ Other grades may be used, provided it is first determined that the reagent is of sufficiently high purity to permit its use without lessening the accuracy of the determination.

7.2 *Purity of Water*—Unless otherwise indicated, references to water shall be understood to mean reagent water conforming to Specification D 1193, Type I.

7.3 *Inert Gas*, Argon (minimum purity 99.99 %).

7.4 *Oxygen* (minimum purity 99.6 %).

7.5 *Stock Solution, Pyridine (10 000 mg N/L)*—Prepare by accurately weighing 5.647 g of pyridine into a 100 mL volumetric flask and dilute to 100 mL with water.

7.6 *Pyridine Solutions, Standard (1000, 500, 100, 50, 10, 5, 1, and 0.5 mg N/L)*—Dilute ten volumes of the stock solution (see 6.5) with 90 volumes of water to prepare a 1000 mg N/L standard. Similarly, by serial dilution with water, prepare 500, 100, 50, 10, 5, 1, and 0.5 mg N/L standards.

8. Preparation of Apparatus

8.1 Assemble apparatus according to manufacturer's instructions.

9. Calibration and Standardization

9.1 Use the water that was used to prepare the standards as a zero blank standard.

9.2 A sample size of 5 to 10 μL is sufficient to cover the concentration range of this test method. The volume of the sample shall be accurately determined.

9.3 *Syringe Injection*—Fill the syringe to the 5 μL mark and retract the plunger so that the liquid meniscus is at the 1 μL mark. Note the position of the plunger. Insert the syringe needle through the inlet septum up to the syringe barrel and allow the furnace to burn all nitrogen bearing residue off the syringe needle. Reset the detector and inject the sample at a controlled rate of 1 to 2 $\mu\text{L/s}$. A syringe drive mechanism (see 6.6) is strongly recommended. When all sample has been injected, withdraw the syringe needle. Retract the plunger so that the sample meniscus is again at the 1 μL point and note the plunger position. The true amount injected is the difference between the two plunger positions.

NOTE 1—If water samples contain high concentrations of suspended matter or dissolved nonvolatile compounds, the syringe needle may tend to plug or the precision and bias of the test method may be degraded. In such a case, the sample boat system should be used (see 6.7).

⁴ *Reagent Chemicals, American Chemical Society Specifications*, American Chemical Society, Washington, DC. For suggestions on the testing of reagents not listed by the American Chemical Society, see *Analar Standards for Laboratory Chemicals*, BDH Ltd., Poole, Dorset, U.K., and the *United States Pharmacopeia and National Formulary*, U.S. Pharmaceutical Convention, Inc. (USPC), Rockville, MD.

9.4 *Boat Injection*—Fill the microlitre syringe to the mark and inject the sample directly into the boat while holding the needle in contact with the side of the boat or with the quartz wool.

9.5 Determine each calibration standard and the zero blank three times and record the net response from the average of each set of standard responses.

9.6 By injecting the same volumetric amount of sample for each determination, the only variables will be total nitrogen concentration and detector response (digital display). Construct a curve plotting milligrams of N per litre versus detector response. Check the complete calibration curve at least once per week; check one or two standards daily.

10. Procedure

10.1 Flush the microlitre syringe several times with the unknown sample. Inject the sample at a controlled rate of 1 to 2 $\mu\text{g/s}$ as described in 9.3 or inject the sample into the sample boat (see 6.7) as described in 9.4.

10.2 Set instrument parameters as recommended by manufacturers. Some changes may be needed to accommodate specific kinds of samples.

11. Calculation

11.1 Determine the total chemically bound nitrogen content of the water sample in milligrams N per litre by reading off the calibration curve (see 9.6).

12. Precision and Bias

12.1 *Collaborative Test*—Using deionized water as the matrix, a stock solution was prepared containing ammonium sulfate, potassium nitrate, and pyridine in such proportions that each compound contributed about one-third of the total nitrogen. Dilutions were made to provide samples of accurately-known concentrations of about 0.5, 1, 10, 100, and 1000 mg N/L. This procedure was repeated, using nitrogen-containing wastewater as the matrix (the wastewater was expected to have a nitrogen content of approximately 20 mg/L, but the actual value was found to be about 150 mg/L). The ten samples plus unspiked deionized (DI) water and unspiked wastewater (as trip blanks) were sent to 13 laboratories for analysis in triplicate according to this test method. The laboratories were required to make up their own standard solutions, and to use their own laboratory water to determine their instrument blank, that they subtracted from their raw results before reporting them.

12.2 *Analysis of Results*—Only nine of the 13 laboratories submitted results for this study. The data were processed as specified in the 1986 edition of Practice D 2777. The whole of one laboratory's results for the DI water matrix samples failed the outlier test. A single result from another laboratory was also rejected as an outlier. One laboratory reported only the average of its three readings, without standard deviation, and another laboratory did only duplicate runs; the results from these two laboratories were used where possible. The overall average value for nitrogen in the blank wastewater was calculated by the collaborative test organizer, who then subtracted it from the reported values for the spiked wastewater samples.

TABLE 1 Precision and Bias

Matrix Water	Amount Added, mg N/L	Amount Found, mg N/L	Net Amount, ^A mg N/L	Precision		Bias, mg N/L
				<i>S_t</i>	<i>S_o</i>	
DI	0.40	0.3	...	0.2	0.1	−0.1 ^B
	1.01	0.8	...	0.4	0.3	−0.2 ^B
	11.1	10.1	...	1.5	0.4	−1.0 ^B
	106	109	...	10	1.0	+3
	1105	1289	...	298	28	+184 ^B
Waste	0.50	150	−2	5	4	−2
	0.91	151	−1	4	2	−2
	10.1	161	9	4	2	−1
	95.8	257	105	45	9	+9
	1008	1336	1184	330	43	+176 ^B
	...	152	0	18	3	...

^A After subtraction of wastewater matrix's N content.

^B Bias significant at the 5 % level.

12.3 Precision—See Table 1.

12.3.1 *DI Water Matrix*—Single-operator precision is poor at the low levels (1 mg N/L and lower) and adequate to good at other levels. Overall precision is poor for the central values and very poor for the extremes.

12.3.2 *Wastewater Matrix*—Both measures of precision were poor to very poor over the whole range tested. This may be attributed in part to the presence of some floccular sediment in the matrix water that may not have been picked up consistently by the syringes used in the test method.

12.4 Bias—See Table 1.

12.4.1 The negative bias values for the wastewater matrix samples are larger than those for the DI water matrix because of the subtraction of the N content of the matrix water from the raw data.

13. Keywords

13.1 chemiluminescence; nitrogen; pyrolysis

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